

The Spirit of Motivational Interviewing: as an apparatus of  
governmentality. An analysis of training materials.

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## ABSTRACT

The practice of motivational interviewing commonly used in the alcohol and other drug treatment field serves as an apparatus of governmentality, to position 'client' and 'clinician' amenable to forms of governance particular to the neo liberal context. Reading materials used to teach motivational interviewing to Alcohol and Other Drug Studies certificate, diploma and graduate level students, which included summaries, diagrams, articles, mathematical devices, screening tools and acronyms, were analysed to assess their discursive effects in making up subjectivity of clinicians and clients. It was found that these simultaneously positioned the client as an active self-governing autonomous subject and a professionalized clinician implicated in the creation of that subject client. In these materials the client is constituted, as having active responsibility for self-care. Simultaneously the clinician interpellates the client into this project through various micro-practices. I conclude that, although alcohol and other drug workers pride themselves on the emancipatory nature of their work, they are enrolled in a project that is politically conservative and individualising. Alcohol and other drug workers have historically addressed the effects of marginalisation, inevitably recommending the collective in addiction recovery. In order honour the ethos of this work they need to interrogate the micro practices whereby they have been enrolled. This contemporary neo liberal project acts to split clients from older communities of understanding to an individuality based on the hyper rational and prudential self.

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*Agus go mbuail le cheile aris*

*Go gcionnai Dhia mbos A laimhr thu*

*(And until we meet again*

*May God, hold you in the palm of his/her hand).*

*Irish Blessing*

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